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1911

GRADING RURAL SCHOOLS

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LET US LAY WELL THE FOUNDATION FOR
THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN.
THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS—THEY
MUST BE IMPROVED



ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

1911

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FOREWORD.

This little pamphlet will help each rural teacher in his work and it will aid each rural community in promoting its educational welfare. The pamphlet was prepared by Mr. N. R. Baker, Supervisor of Rural Schools. This is a guarantee that the suggestions contained are practical, workable, usable. Let us, without further delay, begin to grade and organize more closely those rural schools which have not yet received this attention, and at the same time improve, if possible, the conditions in schools already graded.

Yours for better rural schools,

H. J. WILLINGHAM,

Supt. of Education.

GRADING RURAL SCHOOLS.

While many of the rural schools of the State are well organized yet a rather large proportion of them are not making a very efficient attempt at systematic grading.

There are some real difficulties in the way. It is the purpose of this bulletin to remove these hindrances, which may be enumerated as follows:

1. Large number of classes.
2. Irregular attendance.
3. Short term.
4. Uneven advancement of the pupils.
5. Large percentage of inexperienced teachers employed.
6. Large number of teachers changing positions each year and leaving no adequate record for the guidance of their successors.

The advantages of the graded over the ungraded school may be enumerated as follows:

1. It brings system out of chaos.
2. It arouses a class spirit. This is not the least advantage. Each class or grade feels that it has a work to perform and a reputation to sustain.

3. It becomes an incentive. The pupils are anxious to pass to the next higher grade.

4. Each grade becomes a basis for examination, for correlation and for comparison with other schools.

5. It enables parents to estimate the progress being made.

6. It secures for the child co-ordinate mental balance.

7. It economizes time. Not only is this true of pupil and teacher in the daily program of each school but if a child removes from one district to another he is already classified as shown by a transfer card and consequently loses no time.

HOW GRADING MAY BE DONE.

In the first place there can be no grading without adherence to a course of study and a daily program. Of course the State Manual should be used by the teacher after its adoption by the county board and superintendent as a basis for all grading.

Page 35 contains a suggestive program with 24 recitation periods. There never need be more than 25 recitation periods daily in any rural school.

How can the number be reduced to this amount?

1. Do not admit pupils studying Latin, higher Algebra, Physical Geography, or other high school studies. These should not be taught at least during regular school hours.

2. Reduce the number of grades if possible by eliminating the small grades containing but one or two pupils. This may be done by combining either with the next grade above and giving individual attention for a time, or with the next grade below and giving the pupil supplementary work to do.

3. Elimination by alternation will be the chief method however. This may be done in two ways:

a. By alternating subjects. For instance in the program referred to above history and physiology are placed in the same period, meaning that history may recite one day and physiology the next. Some good teachers prefer however to have the history work completed the first half of the term and laid aside and the physiology taken up and completed the last half.

b. By alternating years, on page 32 of the State Manual in the seventh grade course of study, history and civics are put in together as a topic for the year, and also heavy work in Krohn's Physiology is given. Why not teach history and civics one year and no physiology, reversing the order next year. This of course would necessitate the combining of the sixth and seventh grades in order that upon the completion of the course by any pupil no subject shall have been omitted.

This plan is really contemplated in the suggestive program. This idea may also be applied to alternating the entire sixth and seventh years. There is not very much difference in the capacities of sixth and of seventh grade pupils. All can study the seventh year work one year and the sixth the next if necessary. In order to make this plan uniform throughout the State it will be necessary to have all take the work of the odd grades as fifth and seventh, begin-

ning in the odd years, as 1911 and the even grades beginning in the even years.

Where there is a winter and a summer term or two terms in any fiscal school year the first effort of teacher and superintendent should be to get the community to agree to a change so as to combine the two terms one continuous session. Where this is not practicable have the terms come as close together as possible, and have the work continuous, that is, let the work be so arranged that it will require both terms to satisfy the course of study, and begin the second term where the work of the first term leaves off, having the general promotion time at the end of the second term.

Where pupils are unevenly advanced in the various studies care should be used not to make the grading to Procrustean at first. Some pupils may always be "mixed." The prevailing or most difficult studies should determine the ranking in the grade. For instance if a pupil has spelling in the fifth grade, geography, reading and language with the fourth grade and writing, music and arithmetic with the third grade the pupil should be ranked with the fourth grade.

However much we may theorize our success depends to a great degree upon the mechanical side of our work. Success in grading depends

to a great degree upon the facility and the conscientiousness with which we carry out the course of study, the daily program, and such helps as pupils' report cards, promotion lists, etc. No teacher should fail to leave a complete record of the standing and gradation of each pupil and send duplicate copy of same to the county superintendent for his files.

Now, let us see what the teacher with five grades, for that is the maximum number into which the school needs be divided, will do when she sets out to grade her school. She will first want to separate the first grade from the others.

1. From the State Manual as a guide she will read "Helpful Hints to Young Teachers" and "The School as a Socializing Agency" as an introduction to her work.

2. She will read "The Primary School" on p. 19 of the Manual as an introduction to her primary work.

3. She will then read the condensed course of study on p. 27 so far as it relates to the first grade.

On page 35 she sees how much time is allotted and soon decides how closely she can follow the program.

5. She will read the introduction to spelling

on page 38 and all that it said about the subject in the first grade on page 42.

The same procedure applies to reading on page 45; writing, page 57; language, pages 61 and 64; arithmetic, page 102; geography, page 115; history, page 144; nature study and agriculture, pages 169 and 172; manual training, pages 213, 216, 218, 220, 223; music, pages 228 and 235. She will also possibly give some attention to page 249 and get pupils interested in the library and the reading circle at the beginning of the term.

6. She will then repeat this procedure for all the other grades, omitting only such subjects, if any, as are not included by the county board in the course of study. However, teachers should not be too easily discouraged. If not prepared on certain subjects they should become prepared as soon as possible and in the meantime simply do the best they can.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS.

1 Do not get the idea that a one-room country school cannot be graded. There are more graded than ungraded rural schools.

2. Do not get the idea that a one-room country school does not have its advantages. One of these is the time saved by the younger children listening to the older ones recite. The rural school is the best school in the world to develop individuality. The country school trains to responsibility.

3. Use the word "grade" as relating to "location" of the child in the course of study as often as possible. Explain the grading and the necessity for it to the pupils and to the patrons.

4. The grading should be focalized around reading rather than arithmetic as a basal study especially in the first three or four grades. The chief business of the first three grades is to learn reading and expression by means of oral and written language. In the past we have unduly emphasized arithmetic among children too young to profit by instruction in that difficult branch which requires a development of the reasoning faculties. A difficulty in carrying

out this suggestion will be the paucity of the course of study in reading. In city schools frequently from four to eight readers are read in one grade. Here the library must be freely drawn upon for assistance.

5. It is as much the duty of the teacher to leave a promotion record and complete statements regarding the advancement of each child as it is for her to keep a register and call the roll daily.

6. It frequently occurs that a pupil is ahead of others of his grade in one or more branches. He may be employed profitably in looking up words and topics, in experimenting, correlating, elaborating, demonstrating. Thus while these brighter or more advanced pupils may not be allowed to go higher in the grades they may go deeper into the subject and gain a broader and more comprehensive knowledge.

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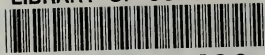
West Virginia Bulletin on Grading Rural Schools.

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